



# Address

by

Colonel J. S. Dennis, C.M.G.

Chief Commissioner of the Department of  
Colonization and Development, Canadian  
Pacific Railway, Montreal, and President  
of the Canada Colonization Association.

Delivered at the Opening of the New Offices of the  
**CANADA COLONIZATION ASSOCIATION**  
at 460 Main St., Winnipeg, Man.



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I esteem it a privilege, as President of the Canada Colonization Association, to be present this morning to participate in the function of the opening of these new splendid offices. I believe it is only proper that any person who takes part in the birth of an organization should be privileged to participate on an occasion like this, when we feel that the organization has reached manhood.

Before speaking to you on the subject of our meeting this morning I would like to read to you some messages which I have received—the first one is from Mr. D. C. Coleman, Vice-President of Western Lines of the Canadian Pacific Railway, who is also a Director of the Canada Colonization Association. He says:

*"Regret my inability to join with Colonel Dennis in welcoming the Canada Colonization Association to its new quarters. The work of the organization in the last few years has been effective in an outstanding degree, and all those interested in the settlement and development of Western Canada will rejoice to know that you will now be in a position to pursue your task in suitable surroundings and with adequate facilities. The President of the Canadian Pacific has asked me to extend to you his congratulations."*

I have also a letter from Mr. P. L. Naismith, Manager of the Department of Natural Resources, who is the Vice-President of the Association, which is addressed to Mr. Herzer:

*"I am in receipt of your telegram of the 3rd inst., advising that Colonel Dennis had consented to officially open the new offices of the Canada Colonization Association in Winnipeg on Monday next. It will not be possible for me to be in Winnipeg on Monday, as the President is to be here on Tuesday and there are several matters to be taken up with him."*

*"I hope you may have a successful meeting and a successful and prosperous period in the new offices."*

I have also a telegram from Mr. C. M. Bowman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Mutual Life Assurance Company of Canada, Waterloo, Ontario, who has taken a very marked interest in the work of the Association, and who is interesting himself in extending the work of the Association in conjunction with certain associations with which he is interested. This telegram is addressed to Mr. Herzer:

*"Delighted to learn that you are occupying new quarters which will enable the Canada Colonization Association to carry on the most successful colonizing effort in the history of Western Canada with still greater success. Kindly convey my regards to Colonel Dennis that I cannot be with you today."*

I said I was privileged to be present at the birth of this organization. When I returned from military service in Russia in 1919, there was a meeting held in Calgary of those who were interested in giving some consideration to the question of seeing what could be done, or was possible to do in speeding up the matter of colonization in Western Canada which as you know had been at a standstill during the war. I was asked to express my views, principally I suppose because it has been my privilege to have spent my life to a great extent in the development of Western Canada.

I said at that time that I felt the important need was for an organization which would undertake the development on some sane basis of the large area of unoccupied, unproductive lands tributary to existing railway lines, which had

passed out of the hand of the Government, and was owned and controlled by the banks, mortgage companies, loan companies and private individuals, and which it was absolutely necessary should be occupied and developed in order to assist in the general colonizing of the country, and principally for the purpose of meeting the conditions which existed then, and unfortunately still exist, of our having an excessive railway mileage in Canada in proportion to our population. Those who attended that meeting were mostly old timers in the West.

I was asked to prepare a memorandum outlining my views, which I did, and as a result a committee was formed for the purpose of creating the Western Canada Colonization Association. That committee obtained a charter and proceeded to endeavor to interest people both in Western and Eastern Canada in the undertaking. I made it a condition that this was to be "a citizens' movement." I said that the time had come when the citizens of Canada should interest themselves in this important problem, and take a prominent part in its solution. I made it a further condition that the Transportation Companies, and the Dominion and Provincial Governments were not to be asked to participate, in fact it was to be purely a citizens' movement.

The Association was organized on that basis, and those who had it in hand solicited subscriptions, the idea being that there was to be a three years campaign carried on, and they asked for a million dollars from the organizations and citizens in Canada, outside of the Transportation Companies and the Governments. The Committee obtained large subscriptions in Western Canada considering conditions then existing and came East. There preliminary talks had taken place regarding the organization, and they succeeded in getting some of the larger banks and many representative people in the East to subscribe, and finally obtained subscriptions for about \$1,200,000.—the idea being that the payments would be made on the basis of three yearly payments.

Then the Organization began to function in small offices here, and like most infants had rather a squally time. They carried on for a year or more and then the subscribers became dissatisfied with the manner in which the organization was being administered, particularly in view of rather unfortunate claims that the organization was going to do some Twenty or Twenty-five million dollars worth of business in a short time, and further because the original understanding had been departed from, and the Provincial Governments had been asked to associate themselves with the Organization and share in its administration. In consequence of this some of the more important subscribers stated that this was a breach of the promises which had been made and they withdrew.

The infant which was then practically in swaddling clothes looked as if it were going to expire, but it was felt that the object which the organization had in view was an important one, and after considerable negotiations it was decided that the subscribers should be released and the Canadian Pacific, the Canadian National and the Canadian Government should take over the organization. This was done, and a new Board created consisting of representatives of the three interested bodies, the understanding being that those three interests should join in the selection of an outstanding man in Western Canada as President, and our late lamented friend, Sir Augustus Nanton was chosen. Under that system we operated for one year, during which time we endeavored to clear up a great many difficulties which had arisen, and correct a great many misunderstandings. Very little had been accomplished in the way of actual colonization.

At the end of the first year the expense of the operation (which I should have explained) was under an arrangement 50% being borne by the Government and 25% each by the two Transportation Companies. At the end of the first year the Dominion Government decided to withdraw. They intimated that they were creating their own land settlement branch from which they felt they could handle their side of colonization.

During the next year we carried on under a partnership arrangement between the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National Railways, each railway sharing the expense half and half. At the end of that year the Canadian National decided to withdraw, taking the ground that they felt they could obtain better results in an organization of their own along somewhat similar lines, and the youth that

the organization had then become again looked as if it were going to expire. It was felt, I think, that it was hardly fair that the Canadian Pacific should be called upon to bear the whole cost of an organization whose object was solely the colonizing of the lands that did not belong to them. However, I was able to put out before our Executive certain facts and figures which we had accumulated during the year

Those figures showed that within the three Prairie Provinces there were along existing railway lines 60,000,000 acres still unoccupied, undeveloped and unproductive, and of that acreage there were 25,000,000 acres of a character fit for immediate colonization and production. I was able to point out that the Department of Colonization and Development and the Department of Natural Resources of the C. P. R. were not in a position to deal with these lands, as they were privately owned, and it was only possible to deal with them through an organization of this kind. After some consideration and—I admit a good deal of persuasion on my part,—it was decided that we should carry on for one year, bearing the total costs. The organization was carried on, and is being carried on on the basis of service without cost; that is we give the services of this organization to those people who desire to make use of it without charge, as far as staff and general expenses are concerned.

The manager that we then had left us, and we felt that it was desirable to put in charge a man from our own staff, who had been with us for some years, and had proven his ability for colonization work, and we selected our present manager, Mr. T. O. F. Herzer, and I would like to say that the success which has been met with has been almost entirely due to the intelligence, industry and energy which Mr. Herzer has displayed in the management of the organization.

During that first year as a Canadian Pacific Organization we did not accomplish very much—we were still striving along as a youth, trying to remove from the minds of the people the bad taste which they had in their mouths (to use a slang expression) with reference to this organization. It had had an uphill course; it had followed in its early days an unwise course, representative men in Western Canada were entirely dissatisfied, and the task fell to us to improve its standing.

During the first year of our organization we were largely concerned in trying to create a good impression, and trying to get the organization on a sound and businesslike basis, and carrying on the work in a manner that would create confidence, and get it into a position to be able to function along right lines.

I succeeded the late Sir Augustus Nanton as President of the Organization in 1924. We then created a Board, which consists entirely of C.P.R. representatives:

*Myself, as President.*

*Mr. P. L. Naismith, Vice-President, who is Manager of the Department of Natural Resources, Calgary.*

*Mr. D. C. Coleman, Vice-President Western Lines, Canadian Pacific Railway.*

*Mr. J. N. K. Macalister, who is Assistant Commissioner.*

*Mr. C. A. Van Scoy, who is our Superintendent of Colonization here.*

*O. Kirkwold, who has been the Sales Manager of the Natural Resources Department for a good many years at Calgary.*

*W. J. Gerow, Land Agent, representing the Company at Saskatoon.*

*Major J. Muller, who is Assistant Superintendent of Colonization at Edmonton.*

*Mr. Frank Russell, who has been in charge of the Land Department for a great many years in Winnipeg, and who is also Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Canada Colonization Association.*

We endeavored to create a Board of men who had a particular interest in the development of Western Canada, many of them with many years experience in development and colonization work.

We struggled along, and two years ago the question again became acute as to whether it was desirable to make the necessary appropriation (which amounts to

a large sum) to carry on, and again there was grave doubt on the part of the Executive whether to make that expenditure and continue the operation. Again persuasive methods had to be used, but they were strengthened on that occasion by reports from Western Canada as to the work the organization was doing, and the desirability of continuing to do it, and finally it was decided to give it a trial and let the youth grow up for another year. Now I am very glad to say, that we have overcome the criticisms made, not only in Western Canada, but also to a very great extent in Eastern Canada, and this has been due to the results accomplished.

You will understand, those of you who are not intimately acquainted with the operations of the Association, the idea is that it is used for the listing of privately owned lands, and is utilized in obtaining colonists to develop that land and the organization is a subsidiary of the Department of Colonization and Development of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The staff proceeded to become active along those lines. We associated with Mr. Herzcr several other men who had been engaged in colonization and land settlement work, and we then endeavored to also associate with the organization certain groups who were wishing to assist as far as they could in this important work in Western Canada, and we were able to interest the Mennonite Colonization Board, the Lutheran Immigration Board, the V.D.C.K. (German-Catholics) German Baptist Board, and certain other organizations who are actively engaged in finding opportunities for their nationalists or co-religionists, and we have with us to-day representatives of all these organizations.

The baby which had struggled through to youth succeeded in overcoming some of the difficulties which I have outlined, and now I think we can feel that the organization has reached manhood, and is able to take possession of the more luxurious quarters which we are opening today. Of course I realize that it would not have been possible for us or the Canadian Pacific to provide quarters of this kind. We are indebted to the Royal Bank for these splendid quarters, due to the fact that the banking organizations have money to expend on their banking quarters. We were able to move from across the street, where we had very poor quarters, very cramped, a very old building and very inadequate for handling our business, and I would like to say that we appreciate very much the assistance that is being given us by the Royal Bank of Canada in enabling us to occupy these quarters at such a very low rental.

As soon as the youth grew up and got over its growing pains, the Association made a very remarkable record. They have placed on the land in the Prairie Provinces, and a few deals in B.C., 2,012 families on 488,092 acres, the basis of their settlement being that they were placed in groups on large acreages of land with buildings and equipment on share of crop plan, and those of you, who like myself, know something of the earlier history of the effort to carry on large farms in Western Canada, know that they have not been as a rule successful, and that it was much better for the owner to divide their farms up, colonizing them with farming families. The result of this is that the production is much greater and the chance of loss much less. As I said we have placed 2,012 families on 488,092 acres, and the Association has available today for further settlement opportunities 250,271 acres which will take care of 1,032 families.

Of the families we have placed, the following different nationalities are represented—British, Scandinavian, Belgian, American, French Canadian, Austrian, Hungarian, Russian, German Lutherans, German Catholics and Mennonites, the Mennonites being the larger majority.

I spoke of the Boards which we have associated with us in an effort to place their nationalists, and a large percentage of the farms which we have settled have been sold to those people on the basis of equipment, that is the colonists are buying the land, and housing accommodation and equipment are provided by the owner, the colonist undertaking to purchase the land at a fixed price, and practically paying for same out of crop production.

We felt that it was necessary to exercise a good deal of care, and more or less close supervision, and the condition made was that the contract between the

vendor of the land and the colonist must be acceptable to us, so that we would feel that they had a reasonable opportunity for success. We do that because we cannot divest ourselves of more or less responsibility for these people and their after-care; so that we really act in a dual capacity—we act for the vendor of the land, and also for the representative of the colonists whom we induce to take up these opportunities, or who come to us from the Boards associated with us,—and that phase of the work requires very careful attention, so that we feel that we must see that the contract entered into between the vendor and the colonist is fair, and gives the colonist a fair chance for success, and at the same time the vendor reasonable security for the sale of his land.

As I have said the vast percentage of the land we have colonized has been on a crop basis. The total value of the land and equipment colonized to date amounts to approximately \$20,000,000. Of that amount \$16,000,000 represents the land, \$3,000,000 is represented by chattels, and \$1,000,000 additional buildings provided by the land owner.

We have found it necessary to open branches of our organization in Western Canada, and we now have branch offices in Saskatoon and Calgary. We have 12 districts representatives engaged in settlement and after-care work, and we have some 200 agents throughout the West obtaining listings from owners. We reserve the right to accept or refuse any land offered to us far sale, both with reference to price, soil condition, etc., so that we assume rather a responsible position with regard to both the land offered and with reference to the character of the contract, and the subsequent care of the colonist, but I think the facts I have given you will indicate not only the value of the work which is being done, but the need for an organization of this kind, and the possibilities of extending the work along the lines which have been followed, so as to solve the great problem we are faced with in the West of obtaining in the first place the kind of colonists we need, who will take up these large areas of unproductive land, which have not been made productive along sound business lines, and the results which have been obtained so far I think justify the optimistic feeling we all have with regard to the future of the organization. Personally I felt from the beginning a need—a pressing need—for an organization of this kind. I believe that the work being done is a good work, not only for the particular provinces in which we operate but for Canada as a whole, and I am confident that if we can carry on as we have been doing for the past two years that we will be able to interest and bring to Canada the class of colonists we need and settle them on the basis that we have been doing.

The recruiting of the colonists for Western Canada is carried on through the Department of Colonization and Development. We have in Great Britain a very complete organization, with head office in London, and we have on the continent of Europe a very extensive organization recruiting colonists in Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Austria, Germany and Poland. Through the Canada Colonization Association here we have the medium with which to deal with a large number of these colonists, and as I have already stated I believe that if we can carry on with the same measure of success that we have met with in the last two years, this Organization will solve the problem we are faced with. I have felt and endeavored to preach from one end of Canada to the other that today the question of immigration and colonization is one of our biggest problems. It is true that we cannot under present conditions invite to Canada any but agriculturists. We would not be justified in encouraging any movement of any other classes, but I am afraid it is not properly appreciated throughout Canada what agricultural development means. We have spent a very considerable time to endeavor to find out what was the actual value of an agricultural family to Canada, and we are able to show from Government returns that the value of a family, consisting of five, to the mercantile and industrial life of Canada amounted to \$1583 per annum, that is covering a budget of what they need in the way of clothing, shoes, etc. We also went to some trouble to find out what a family of the same size is worth to a transportation company, and we ascertained that a family of five adjacent to a railway, whose budget was the amount I have mentioned amounted to \$716 per annum in transportation.

It is a matter of simple figuring and does not need any mathematician to make it perfectly clear to the business interests of Canada what the results will ultimately be if we increase the movement of our agricultural families from the small numbers we are now able to get to a wide margin. The smaller places, particularly in the West have a big interest in this, because every 10 families mean to the merchants in that town \$15,000 per annum for supplies which the merchant furnishes. The question of what it means to the transportation companies appeals very strongly to the Executives of both railways, because we have these two Companies recruiting the people that we can absorb, placing them on the land, and giving them attention after we get them here. These Departments are costing the Railways large sums of money, and I do not think it is unfair to say that the people of Canada as a whole do not appreciate what this means to them in immediate returns. It is true we obtain the benefit derived from the transportation of these people, but this is a small item compared to the benefit to Canada generally.

We have compiled figures, which show that the C.P.R. expended \$70,000,000 in colonization and development of Western Canada, and that sum is in excess of the total sum which has been expended by the Dominion Government, and further considerable expenditures are being made in a direct effort to speed up the movement of desirable colonists to Canada for developing the unproductive land, of which a very considerable proportion will bring no direct returns to the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The activities are all more or less closely linked together, and the Canada Colonization Association, which is now operating as a subsidiary branch of the Department of Colonization and Development is being operated and maintained by the Canadian Pacific in the effort to speed up colonization in Western Canada.

As President of the organization I have much pleasure in welcoming you all here this morning. As I said before I do not know if we can live up to these magnificent surroundings, but I can only add that if we can keep up with our record of the past two years, I think we will have no cause to complain.

I now declare these new premises of the Canada Colonization Association open for business, and conclude with the hope that during the coming year we will be able to show results that will justify those premises.

Winnipeg, June 6th, 1927.